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## *House of Representatives*

HON. STEVE ISRAEL  
OF NEW YORK

### **EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE AND FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, 2004**

MR. ISRAEL: Mr. Chairman, I will cast my vote on the \$87 billion supplemental appropriation for Iraq based on two conflicting influences.

First, this central premise: we simply cannot invade a country, destroy its infrastructure, leave it without lights, water, or jobs, and then walk away from it. We made a commitment to rebuild Iraq, and voting against this bill is effectively canceling the check.

Conversely, Mr. Chairman, is my belief that this bill, and particularly the political process that brought it to the Floor, is deeply flawed. There is no doubt in my mind that the Administration is essentially holding the safety of our troops hostage to the passage of this bill without any of the commonsense compromises sought by the Democratic Caucus.

The issue for me, Mr. Chairman, is whether flaws should override final passage of the appropriation. I have come to the conclusion that the Administration's irresponsible handling of Iraq and this supplemental bill cannot allow us to irresponsibly defeat it. But, I cast my vote with the demand that the Administration use these resources to make immediate and dramatic improvements in several areas of engagement in Iraq.

We used force in Iraq based on the view that we could create a transformative model in the Middle East of democracy, prosperity, human rights, education and empowerment. Defeating this appropriation would be the equivalent of saying we are canceling the check for those vital goals. It is the equivalent of saying, "We broke the merchandise, and now we are returning it."

And to what are we returning it? Waging war on Iraq and refusing to pay for the peace would not create a transformative model of peace and prosperity, but of violence and

poverty. It would bolster the calls for jihad against the West. It would fuel permanent resentments against our country and the West. It would be handing terrorists a long-term victory after we supposedly won a short-term war. It would create a rubble-strewn stage on which Baathists could stand, holding Iraq as an example to the world: "What have the Americans brought: no jobs, no lights, no roads." They would exploit the instability and proselytize an ideology that places suicide bombings ahead of ballots as the agent of change in society. They would make Afghanistan under the Taliban look like a summer camp.

Additionally, Mr. Chairman, there is the issue of our troops. Last week, I met in my Long Island office with two soldiers who are serving in Iraq. They were home on rest and recreation. I believe the Administration's horrible planning of post-war activities has already left our troops exposed and fatigued. The Pentagon's own Stars and Stripes newspaper has surveyed our troops and found widespread dissatisfaction, low morale, weak sense of mission, and potentially serious reenlistment problems. Our soldiers need flak jackets, they need armored vehicles, they need communications equipment, they need a much more serious program of military police and civil affairs training.

When things go wrong, as they have in Iraq up to this point, there are two ways to respond. We can say, "What went wrong and who do we blame?" or we can say, "What went wrong and how do we fix it?" Refusing to fund our troops and the construction of Iraq is not the way to fix the Administration's current failures there. The way to fix those failures is to fund improvements and require accountability and responsibility.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I use this vote today to put the Administration on notice that it must use these resources to improve the following specific areas: create broader alliances; crack down on cronyism and war profiteering; hasten the supply of flak jackets and armored vehicles needed by our troops, end the strain and fatigue on our Guard and Reserve and provide them with a realistic return date, and account for every penny that is being spent. If the Administration fails basic tests of responsibility and accountability, then they cannot and should not ask for my vote again.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I also wish to express my outrage at the leadership of this House for putting politics over the military, for putting partisanship over the very lives of our troops. The Republican leadership has steadfastly refused to even consider Democratic amendments that would have made this bill more palatable by releasing funds in increments on an as-needed basis. The Republican leadership refused to move forward like statesman President Harry Truman working with a responsible Republican Senate to create and implement a transparent Marshall Plan. Instead, they have forsworn consensus for cronyism and have basically said, "It is our way or the highway." They have essentially held our troops as political hostages to a cynical legislative strategy: either vote for the bill as we demand it, or leave our troops behind.

I will not play that cynical game, Mr. Chairman. To protect our troops and bring them back to Long Island safe, I will vote for this bill. But let everyone understand that this Administration and the leadership of this Congress has compounded bad planning with

bad politics, and is shamefully exploiting the vulnerability of our troops to advance a legislative strategy.

It is for the future of a safer world, a stable Middle East, and the lives and well-being of our troops that I support this bill. It is not for the present policies and politics of those who drafted it and sullied it with partisanship. I rise to vote ``aye" because I am proud to stand with our troops during these dark days. But I am not proud to stand with those who exacerbated the problems and manipulated the process. The future will judge them. The present requires me to support this bill with the improvements I have stipulated.